

# MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

*Bulletin of the Maryland Ornithological Society*

*2101 Bolton Street, Baltimore 17, Maryland*



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M A R Y L A N D B I R D L I F E

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## SUMMARY OF MARYLAND NEST RECORDS, 1951

Edwin Willis

The nesting season is probably the most interesting season of the birding year. At no other time are birds so tame and easily observed as when they are at the nest; some incubating birds, such as the Blue-headed Vireo, will occasionally allow one to touch them. In this little-explored field, each person who determines the incubation or nesting period of a species experiences the thrill of the pioneer; and it may be that you in finding and observing a nest will discover facts new to science. Observations of the home-life of birds, of their courtship and pairing, and of their devotion to eggs and young, always provide a host of pleasant experiences.

Finding a nest is usually simple. Perhaps the first sign of the presence of a nest will be the male proclaiming his territory with loud songs from a conspicuous perch. Or perhaps a pair, nervous at one's presence, will give away a nest. There is very likely to be a nest if one adult or the other, especially the female, calls constantly or is carrying food or nesting material. At this stage, it helps very much to know the general location of a typical nest; the Audubon Bird Guide and Audubon Water Bird Guide (Pough and Eckelberry) are good references. If one retires some distance away or hides nearby, one of the pair may go to the nest; "rushing" the site may flush the adult from the nest. Occasionally, the calls of young birds may draw one's attention to the dark shape in the foliage or the little hollow in the ground which serves as a nest.

So far, 48 of the 176 species which have been recorded nesting in Maryland in past years have not been reported in these nesting summaries (1949-1951). Some of these, such as the Green Heron, Broad-winged Hawk, Whip-poor-will, Nighthawk, Fish Crow, Black and White Warbler, Pine Warbler, and Eastern Meadowlark, certainly afford good opportunities for alert observers. For birders who wish to add to the above 176 species, there are such nests as those of the Wild Turkey, Ring-necked Pheasant, Alder Flycatcher, Hermit Thrush, and Mourning Warbler to look for. Be sure to report all nests which you find on the Society's nest cards or by letter.

Ninety-nine of the 176 species were reported in 1951; selected notes on these species follow. Underscored dates or localities indicate exceptionally early or late records, or first records for a county.

PIED-BILLED GREBE - One young seen on Lake Roland June 15 (Charles Buchanan).

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON - Nesting colony at Blackwater Refuge (W. S. Webster).

LEAST BITTERN - Three Strawberry Point nests (Willis) with 2, 4, and 3 eggs. Eggs in nests, May 27-June 30; young left on June 24, July 1, July 10. Incubation 18-20 days, young in nest 9-12 days.

MALLARD - Eleven eggs in Middle River nest, May 5-7, destroyed (Willis). Six young at Forest Glen, Montgomery Co., May 30 (F. C. Cross).

WOOD DUCK - Two broods with a female (25 birds in all) at Lake Roland, July 4 (Pearl Heaps, Alice Kaestner). At Patuxent Refuge, 10 incubating hens (one brood each) produced 116 ducklings; first egg laid Mar. 10; young hatched about May 2 to June 25 (Clark G. Webster).

TURKEY VULTURE - Nest under brush-pile at edge of woods in Greensboro had 2 eggs by May 1, 2 young in nest, May 27-June 9 (Marvin Hewitt).

RED-TAILED HAWK - Immature seen at Greensboro, July 17 (Hewitt).

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK - Building, 35 feet up in oak tree, Apr. 14, at White Marsh (Douglas Hackman).

BALD EAGLE - Adult near Greensboro nest 80 feet up in pine, Apr. 6-18 (A. J. and R. B. Fletcher). Young in nest at Gunpowder Neck, Apr. 6 (Imhof).

OSPREY - Two nests. Five young banded in ground nest on island off South Point, Worcester Co., July 7 (J. H. Buckalew).

RUFFED GROUSE - Female flew off new nest by Wolf Swamp, May 30; later deserted (C. S. Robbins).

BOB-WHITE - Seven chicks with female, Middle River, Aug. 19 (Willis). Five late young with pair at Gibson Is., Oct. 20 (Abbotts).

CLAPPER RAIL - Eight eggs in Robins Marsh nest, July 20 (R. E. Stewart).

AM. OYSTER-CATCHER - Young barely able to fly banded on July 3 and a larger young banded on July 12, island off South Point (Buckalew, Stewart).

KILLDEER - Six nests reported, each with 4 eggs, as early as Apr. 10 (Willis) and as late as July 15--second-brood nest (Denton, Fletchers). Young hatched early morning of June 2 at Frederick (Martha K. Slemmer).

WOODCOCK - Small young at Middle River, Apr. 27 (Willis).

UPLAND PLOVER - Egg broken by mowing machine found at Worthington Valley, Baltimore Co., June 3 (M.O.S. trip).

SPOTTED SANDPIPER - Two young, one egg in Strawberry Point nest, June 24 (Willis).

LAUGHING GULL - Eleven nests with 1 to 3 eggs each in Robins Marsh, Worcester Co., July 11 (Buckalew, Stewart). Second Maryland nest record.

GULL-BILLED TERN - Twenty-five pairs on islands off South Point and 3 pairs on Sinepuxent islands, a large increase. Sixteen young banded July 12, and two nests with 3 eggs each found (Buckalew, Stewart).

FORSTER'S TERN - 713 nests in Robins Marsh, July 11, 496 with eggs (61 with 1, 173 with 2, 262 with 3); 143 young banded nearby. Some late nests with eggs, July 20, when 110 young were banded (Buckalew, Stewart).

COMMON TERN - 340 young banded off South Point and 135 on Sinepuxent islands, July 12; 100 or more nests with eggs. 202 young banded, July 20, off South Point (Buckalew, Stewart).

LEAST TERN - Fifteen nests with eggs, July 20, 9 young banded on July 12 at Ocean City (Buckalew, Stewart).

BLACK SKIMMER - 153 young banded off South Point and 119 on Sinepuxent islands, July 12. Late nest with eggs, July 20, at Ocean City (Buckalew, Stewart, Clark Webster).

MOURNING DOVE - Ten nests reported. Two eggs in Unity nest, Apr. 4 (Tommy Low) and 2 in White Marsh nest, Aug. 30 (Hackman); two young left Baltimore nest, Sept. 6 and 8 (Lena Picker). Young in one Middle River nest 17 days.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO - Six nests. Three eggs in Garrett County nest, June 17 (M.O.S. trip). Two eggs in White Marsh nest Aug. 28 (Hackman) and two young, 1 egg in late Middle River nest, Sept. 13-16 (Willis).

BARN OWL - First young hatched in Blackwater Refuge tower, Apr. 13 (W. Steele Webster).

BARRED OWL - Two young in nest 15 feet up in oak stub, Apr. 28-May 14 at White Marsh (Hackman).

S&W-WHET OWL - One young in partial juvenile plumage in Wolf Swamp, Garrett Co., June 16 (Robbins, M.O.S.); adult seen there in May; second Maryland record of young birds.

CHIMNEY SWIFT - Five nests. Adults broke twigs off trees, May 20-June 16 (Willis). Young in Patuxent Refuge nests July 27-Aug. 10 (Robbins).

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD - Two eggs in Bittering nest, June 16 (M.O.S. trip) and young in Choptank River nest, Aug. 1 (Hewitt).

FLICKER - Five nests. Building at Middle River, Apr. 15-May 13, young out of nest, June 10 and July 17. Nest heights, 10 feet 7 inches to 38 feet.

FILEATED WOODPECKER - Large young in nest 25 feet up in dead cherry, June 15, Garrett County above Gorman (Robbins).

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER - Pair courting in Baltimore, May 24, at new nest hole in maple (Pearl Hsaps, Alice Kaestner). Parents fed 3 young out of Leakin Park nest, July 17 (Brandenburg).

HAIRY WOODPECKER - Young in nest at Patuxent Refuge, May 21, and on Backbone Mountain above Gorman, May 31 (Robbins, Stewart).

DOWNY WOODPECKER - Young in Middle River nest, May 31-June 5 (Willis).

EASTERN KINGBIRD - Building at White Marsh, May 25, and incubating June 2 (Hackman). Two young out of nest at Patapsco Flats, June 15 (Brandenburg). Last young left on July 15 at Middle River (Willis). Seven nests, 10-54 feet up; median, 30 feet.

CRESTED FLYCATCHER - Three newspaper-box nests. Building May 26 and June 18 near Baltimore (Duvall Jones). Three young in Berwyn nest, Aug. 4 (Dr. J. S. Cooley). Young fed in Denton nest box, June 25 (Fletchers).

EASTERN PHOEBE - Seven nests. Building, Apr. 21, Middle River (Willis). Two young in Patuxent Refuge nest, July 13 (Stewart), built May 4-10, had young June 2 and 3. Two N.W. Baltimore nests.

LEAST FLYCATCHER - Nest in crotch of sapling at Lake Roland (A. A. Brandenburg, Alice Kaestner).

EASTERN WOOD PEWEE - Building, May 30 (Willis). Young of one brood out about July 26, and young fell from second brood nest 40 feet away, Sept. 16; it was still on ground below, half-feathered and fed by adult, Sept. 19, Middle River (Willis). Late young fed at Denton, Oct. 1 (Fletchers). Heights of 7 nests, 15 to 49 feet, median 20 feet.

HORNED LARK - Three nests. Three eggs at Middle River hatched on Mar. 25 (destroyed by Apr. 5--Willis); four eggs Apr. 13. Several young in later nest between tire ruts of road (O. W. Crowder).

TREE SWALLOW - Two nests on Gunpowder Neck (T. A. Imhof).

BANK SWALLOW - About 50 nests in gravel pits at White Marsh May 30-June 5 (Hackman).

ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW - Building, May 1 (Denton, Fletchers) and June 9 (Greensboro, Marvin Hewitt).

BARN SWALLOW - 97 nests reported, 46 from Patuxent Refuge (Robbins) and 24 from Philip J. Ottenritter at Fishers Farm, Baltimore Co. (supervised by David E. Davis). Two to 7 eggs were laid (mean, 4.4). Building on May 1 (Denton, Fletchers) and as late as July 13 on the third nesting of the same pair (uncertain success, first broods). Eggs of last nesting at Fletchers' were laid July 17-20, hatched by Aug. 5. Two broods frequently raised, and even in same nest--approximately a week in several cases (Robbins, Ottenritter) between young

leaving and first egg of second brood. Incubation period reported about 15-16 days, young in nest about 18 or 19 days in four cases each. However, both were quite variable. Occasionally the stay in the nest was as long as a month. All nests were on man-made structures, between 7 feet and 14 feet up.

CLIFF SWALLOW - Probably eggs were in 48 occupied nests on and in barn near Bittinger, Garrett Co., June 16 (M.O.S. trip).

PURPLE MARTIN - Last young left Denton nest between Aug. 24 and 28 (Fletchers). Report from Duvall Jones (Rosedale) on 8 nests; about 2 weeks were spent building nests, 17-20 days incubating, and 22-29 days in the nest; clutches of 3 to 5 eggs, mean 4. There was 81% success. The first set was completed on May 29, and young left that nest on July 13.

BLUE JAY - Ten nests found, 7 successful. At Middle River, building Apr. 9 and July 9, incubating Apr. 20 and as late as July 30, young out of nest May 30 and Aug. 16 (late). Building Apr. 28 at Denton (A. May Thompson); second Eastern Shore nest record. Nests from 11 feet, 3 inches to 41 feet; mean, 26.4 feet.

CROW - Nest 65 feet up in red spruce at Wolf Swamp contained large young, May 30-June 2 (Robbins).

CAROLINA CHICKADEE - Nine nests reported. Excavating at Lake Roland, Apr. 6 (Alice Kaestner). One young out of nest and 2 young in nest, May 11, near Gaithersburg, Montgomery Co. (J. W. Taylor, C. H. Mayhood). Eggs in Patuxent Refuge box as late as May 29, young in as late as June 14 (Robbins).

TUFTED TITMOUSE - Four nests. Four eggs on May 6, 3 young left on June 6 at Middle River (Willis). Four young in Denton nest June 30 (Roger Adams).

BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH - Adults feeding young in Elliott Is. nest, May 6 (Tom Hallowell, Robbins).

HOUSE WREN - Thirty-six nests. First egg laid at Patuxent Refuge on May 9; clutch size of 16 first brood nests, 5 to 7 (mean, 5.9); 13 second brood nests, 4 to 6 (mean, 5.0)(Robbins). Three eggs were in Berwyn nest, July 29 (Robbins).

BEWICK'S WREN - Carrying food to young in nest box, Dan's Mountain, Allegany Co., on May 12 (Leonard Llewellyn).

CAROLINA WREN - Five nests reported, in such situations as roll of roofing paper (M. Butenschoen, Denton), fertilizer sack (Hackman, White Marsh) and tin can (Fletchers, Denton). Five young left Middle River nest, May 13 (with parents June 13), and Bengies Point nest after Aug. 14 (Willis).

LONG-BILLED MARSH WREN - Forty-one nests at Middle River; 45.4% of the eggs laid produced fledglings. First set completed May 24, last July 28; first young hatched June 6 and last Aug. 11, showing 14-day incubation period; young left June 19 and as late as Aug. 24,

showing 13-14 day stay in nest. Nests placed 1 foot, 7 inches to 4 feet, 10 inches high; median, 3 feet, 1 inch. Mean clutch, 4.0 eggs; extremes 2 to 5 (Willis).

**MOCKINGBIRD** - Fourteen nests found, heights 3 to 15 feet (median, 8 feet). Building Apr. 11, first set complete by Apr. 22. Three broods of one pair left the nest May 25, July 5, and Aug. 13 (Willis). Two young out of the nest were fed on Aug. 24 at Denton (Fletchers).

**CATBIRD** - Forty-six nests, clutches 1 to 4 eggs (mean, 3.3). At Middle River, 60% of young left safely. Courtship display seen Apr. 29 at Middle River; first building, May 2. The earliest nests had eggs laid May 11-14, hatched May 26, and young left June 6 (Robbins at Berwyn, Willis at Middle River). The latest eggs were laid July 29-31 at Middle River, but possibly short-tailed young near Denton nest, Aug. 25 (Fletchers), came from a later clutch. Incubation 13-14 days, young in nests 10-11 days. Nests from 2 feet, 3 inches to 20 feet; median, 6 feet.

**BROWN THRASHER** - Eighteen nests, five clutches each of 2 eggs, 3 eggs, and 4 eggs. Courtship seen Apr. 16 at Middle River, where only 37% of young left nests safely. Nest almost completed Apr. 22, set completed May 1 and hatched May 13 (Willis). First young out on May 30 at Denton, and one incubating there July 7 (Fletchers). Bob-tailed young caught, July 22, at place where first-brood young had been out June 7 (Willis). Incubation and stay of young in nest 12-13 days. Two ground nests, and one 14 feet up; median, 5 feet.

**ROBIN** - Seventy-five nests reported; about 60% of the 53 at Middle River produced one or more fledglings. Twenty sets of 4 eggs reported, eleven of 3. Two eggs in early Halethorpe nest, Apr. 5 (I. E. Hampe). Young of first brood left nest commonly from May 14 (Denton, Fletchers), to June 7, with some begging afterward and scattered broods out until the first second-brood young left about June 20. A pair which had young out on May 15 at Rosedale was building the second nest, May 18 (Jones). Second and third-brood young left nests before the end of July, except for two young which left an extremely late Denton nest, Aug. 25 (Fletchers). Incubation 12 days (7 cases) and young in nest 11 to 15 days (usually 13). Nests 4 to 50 feet high; median, 12 feet, 8 inches.

**WOOD THRUSH** - 47 nests, about 57% of young leaving safely. Clutches 2 to 5 eggs, mean 3.24. They were building May 5, with first eggs laid May 12-15. The first young hatched on May 27. Young of first brood left June 9 to June 27 or 30. First young of second brood left July 22, and last left nest Aug. 14--late. The banded young called after parents to Aug. 30. Young left one nest on June 12, and second-brood young left same nest, July 24--16 days between young leaving and start of second-brood clutch (Willis). Median nest height, 8 feet, 7 in.; extremes, 4 feet and 24 feet.

**EASTERN BLUEBIRD** - Twenty-five nests reported. Four young left White Marsh nest about May 31 (Hackman), about same time as the two

earliest Denton nests (one of which had 5 eggs, May 1—Fletchers). Last of second-brood young were in Denton nest, Aug. 10 (Fletchers).

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER - Nest 40 feet up in elm, Marshall Dierssen game refuge near Seneca, May 11 (Taylor, Mayhood).

CEDAR WAXWING - Building at Lake Roland, June 11 (Alice Kaestner). Adults at White Marsh nest, June 29 (Hackman).

STARLING - Building Apr. 2-27, earliest first-brood young out May 16 (hatched about Apr. 25, allowing for 21-day stay determined at one nest) and most were out by May 28. Second-brood young were fed June 17, left nest July 8. A nest which 4 young left on May 22 had 5 eggs in re-lined nest, June 2 (Willis).

WHITE-EYED VIREO - Last of 4 young left Greensboro nest, June 28 (E. Bilbrough).

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO - Building at Lake Roland, May 6 (Mrs. Kaestner). At Middle River, 4 eggs, June 3; young left June 24 (Willis).

BLUE-HEADED VIREO - Three eggs and 2 of Cowbird in Backbone Mt. nest June 1 (Robbins). Cowbird young removed June 2; one dead nearly-brown young vireo and one egg were in the nest June 15.

RED-EYED VIREO - Eight nests reported, only 2 successful. One stole paper from Wood Thrush nest, May 27. First set laid June 6-8; young left nests between July 5 and Aug. 8; immatures fed to Sept. 16 (Willis).

WARBLING VIREO - 2 young out of nest fed by parents at Jones Falls, Baltimore, June 18 (Miss Brandenburg).

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER - Four young and one Cowbird egg in rotted beam of old house at Pennyfield, June 11 (Taylor, Mayhood). Parents fed young in Denton nest-gourd, June 30 (Fletchers).

NASHVILLE WARBLER - Nest with 4 eggs at Wolf Swamp, Garrett Co., May 30 (Stewart, Robbins); the 4 young two-thirds grown, June 16 (Robbins and M.O.S.); first Maryland nest record.

YELLOW WARBLER - Eleven Middle River nests (Willis), 6 successful. Two to five eggs were laid; mean, 3.8. Two clutches were completed by May 20, young hatched on June 1 and left about June 10 (12-day incubation, 9-day stay in nest). Young left nest on July 1 and were still fed (perhaps Cowbird) in another nest, July 10. Nests from 2 feet, 8 inches to 32 feet; median, 5 feet.

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER - Female carried nest material in Wolf Swamp, Garrett Co., June 3 (Stewart).

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER - Female was building nest 55 feet up in red spruce at Wolf Swamp, May 31 (Robbins).

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER - Nest with 4 young in pine tree near Cobb Island, Charles County, June 9 (Taylor).

OVEN-BIRD - Three early young out of nest on May 29 at Patuxent Refuge (Robbins).

LOUISIANA WATER-THRUSH - Young out of nest were fed in Gwynn Falls Park, June 18 (Miss Brandenburg).

YELLOW-THROAT - Two Middle River nests. Young left nest June 9 and July 17; male fed juvenile, Aug. 8 (Willis).

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT - Four nests; 4 eggs June 2-9 (Willis) and 3 eggs July 6 to 19 (Hackman). Young left Middle River nests July 4 and 9. Nest heights 2 feet, 3 inches to 3 feet.

AM. REDSTART - Building at Lake Roland, Apr. 26 and May 17 (Mrs. Kaestner). Female on Leakin Park nest, June 16, and fed 3 young out of nest, June 26 (Miss Brandenburg).

ENGLISH SPARROW - Courtship seen, Apr. 6, at Middle River. Building Apr. 14. Half-grown young, Frederick Co., Apr. 27 (Rod Smith). First young left nest May 13, last fed in nest Aug. 30 (Willis). Late young fed on Oct. 20 at Gibson Island (Mrs. Vinup).

RED-WING - Seventy-eight Middle River nests; 53.6% of the eggs laid produced fledglings. There were 5 clutches of 2 eggs, 45 of 3, and 21 of 4 (mean, 3.23). Three early young out of nest, May 12, came from clutch completed Apr. 20 and hatched May 1, allowing for 11-12 day incubation period determined from five nests and 10-11 day brooding period determined from four nests. Last young left the nest July 29. Median nest height for cat-tails, 1 foot 10 inches; extremes, 1 foot and 3 feet, 6 inches. Nests in bushes were from 1 foot, 8 inches to 7 feet (median, 3 feet, 2 inches).

ORCHARD ORIOLE - Seven nests reported. Building at Middle River May 15 (Willis). Five young hatched, June 6, at Denton (Roger Adams). Three young out of nest were fed at Denton, Aug. 2 (Fletchers).

BALTIMORE ORIOLE - Six nests. Building at Lake Roland, May 6 and May 14 (Mrs. Kaestner). Young left Denton nest, June 9 (Fletchers). Immatures in family group begged from female at Middle River, Aug. 2 (Willis).

PURPLE GRACKLE - One Denton nest (Fletchers) and 25 in Middle River woods (Willis). Building from Mar. 21 until Apr. 27. Set of 5 eggs laid Apr. 6-10, hatched Apr. 21, young left May 4 (early). Adults carried food as late as July 10. Nests from 10 to 48 feet; mean, 31.6 feet.

COWBIRD - Cases of parasitism; Wood Thrush, 1 (Fletchers); Blue-headed Vireo, 1 (Robbins); Red-eyed Vireo, 1 (Miss Brandenburg); Prothonotary Warbler, 1 (Taylor, Mayhood); Yellow Warbler, 4 (Willis); Am. Redstart, 2 (Miss Brandenburg); Orchard Oriole, 1 (Willis); Cardinal, 1 (Willis); Chipping Sparrow, 4 (Fletchers, Mae Sterling, Hackman); Song Sparrow, 2 (Willis). An egg was in the Cardinal nest, May 10, and young left on June 1. Young left Hackman's Chippy nest, July 3.

SCARLET TANAGER - Adults were at White Marsh nest, July 3 (Hackman). Young left Middle River nest, July 31 (Willis).

CARDINAL - Twelve nests, most successful. One set of 2, six of 3, and two of 4 eggs. Two early young just out of Middle River nest, May 7, came from clutch hatched on Apr. 28. Three eggs were laid, July 15-17, 7:20 to 8 A.M. each day, in Pikesville nest; the first two young hatched on July 28 and the third, July 29 (12-day incubation). Young left on Aug. 8 (9-10 day stay in nest) and were still fed, Aug. 27 (Miss Carrie Lipscomb). Grown young were fed Sept. 18 at Middle River (Willis). Nests were from 4 feet to 14 feet, 6 inches; median, 5 feet, 10 inches.

ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK - Female with fecal sac, Garrett County, June 23-24 (Taylor).

INDIGO BUNTING - Female fed grown young at Sandy Point, Sept. 9 (Jones, Jack Weaver, Willis).

DICKCISSEL - Four fresh eggs in nest at Ashton, Washington Co., June 15 (Robbins).

GOLDFINCH - Young out of nest, Aug. 23, at Laurel (Robbins), and young begged from parents, Oct. 21, at Strawberry Point (Willis), where two nests were found, one with a 6-egg clutch.

TOWHEE - Four successful Middle River nests (Willis), on ground except for one 5 feet, 3 inches up. Three young left earliest nest, June 1, and three more left second-brood nest of same pair, July 15. Young left nest on Aug. 14, 21 days after completion of 3-egg clutch, July 24. Flying young were fed at Gibson Island, Sept. 19 (Mrs. Vinup).

SAVANNAH SPARROW - Young barely able to fly in pasture near Oakland, Garrett Co., June 3 (Stewart); first positive evidence of Maryland nesting.

VESPER SPARROW - Two Denton nests (Fletchers), both on ground in pasture, with 4 eggs, May 11 (young in nest May 18-27, 9 days), and 3 eggs on July 8, 2 of which hatched; they left about July 24.

CHIPPING SPARROW - Twenty-one nests found, 2 to 20 feet up (median 10 feet). Denton nest built by May 1 (Fletchers). Young out of nest on Backbone Mt., June 1 (Robbins). Building Denton nest, Aug. 7; young left between Aug. 25 and 27 (Fletchers). Sets of 2 to 4 eggs.

FIELD SPARROW - Eleven nests, four sets of 4 eggs and three sets of 3. One egg in Middle River nest, May 6. Young hatched May 18-19 and left May 28 from Denton nest (Fletchers). Building on July 17 at White Marsh (Hackman).

SONG SPARROW - Twenty-six nests; some 55% of young left Middle River nests safely. Sets of 2 to 5 eggs; mean, 4.7. Building, Apr. 21, first egg, Apr. 26. First-brood young left between May 20 and about June 13, second-brood young between June 26 and July 27, and third-brood young between about Aug. 5 and Sept. 1 (Middle River, Willis). First-brood nests from ground to 1 foot, 2 inches; second-brood from ground to 5 feet, 10 inches, and third brood from 11 inches to 6 feet; median, 1 foot, 2 inches.

1631 Gail Rd., Baltimore

THE SEASON - September, October, November, December, 1951

Chandler S. Robbins

Except for rather weak cold fronts which penetrated into our area on Sept. 2 and 8, uniform warm weather persisted almost to the close of September. October, likewise, was warm, and the month closed without any killing frost except in Garrett and parts of Allegany and Washington Counties. These conditions were conducive to late departures of summer residents and transients, and tardy arrivals of wintering species. In November, however, Mother Nature delivered abnormally cold and windy weather, with sub-zero temperatures in Garrett County; the migration of most species was brought to an abrupt close in that month. Although December averaged warmer than usual, an extended cold snap brought sub-zero temperatures to many stations in Prince Georges County, and a low of  $-18^{\circ}$  to Hancock on the 17th.

On the last day of October an intense low pressure area, accompanied by high winds and snow, swept across the Great Lakes region. The strong northwest winds and freezing temperatures which followed in its wake produced a heavy southeastward flight of waterfowl, but these birds ran into an extensive rain system in the Appalachians and sought shelter on all bodies of open water. The result was the greatest precipitation of waterfowl ever recorded in the Appalachian lakes.

Loons, Grebes, Gannets, Herons. Good numbers of Common Loons and Horned and Pied-billed Grebes were reported. A flock of 24 Common Loons in Eastern Bay on Nov. 14 by Mrs. W. L. Henderson is the largest she has ever noted in that area. The storm of Nov. 2-3 brought 2 Common Loons and 30 Horned Grebes to Mountain Lake in Garrett County (Miss H. Elizabeth Slater). Pied-billed Grebes reached their maximum of 26 at this same location on Nov. 3, and Miss Slater observed the last 2 on Nov. 20. A single Gannet at Gibson Island on Dec. 12 (Clair Symington) is of special interest in view of the very small number of records from the upper Chesapeake. Late heron departures include a Little Blue Heron at Kent Narrows on Nov. 5 (Mrs. Henderson). A Yellow-crowned Night Heron at Sandy Point on Sept. 9 is the first ever recorded in that area (Edwin Willis, Duvall Jones, Jack Weaver).

Swans, Geese and Ducks. The most interesting group of waterfowl records by far is the report of birds which sought refuge on Mountain Lake at Mountain Lake Park, Garrett Co., during the Nov. 2-3 storm, as reported by Miss Slater. Several of the diving ducks had been recorded on only two or three previous occasions in Garrett County. The following Mountain Lake records refer to Nov. 2 unless otherwise specified: Whistling Swan, 50; Gadwall, 6 (Nov. 3); Redhead, 12 (Nov. 3); Canvas-back, 1; Greater Scaup, 4 (Nov. 3); American Golden-eye 15 (Nov. 2-3); Buffle-head, 75 (20 on Nov. 3); Old-squaw, 1 (Nov. 1 and 2); White-winged Scoter, 6; Ruddy Duck, 200; American Merganser, 3 (Nov. 1-2); Red-breasted Merganser, 20 (Nov. 3). Other species involved in this flight were Canada Goose, Black Duck, Baldpate,

Pintail and Coot. The same storm deposited a Ring-necked Duck, 9 American Golden-eyes and 5 Buffle-heads on Emmitsburg Reservoir, Nov. 3 (Prof. and Mrs. J. W. Richards). Rarities among the waterfowl included a pair of European Widgeon at Gibson Island on Oct. 30 (Mrs. Gail Tappan and Mrs. Henderson), and a female King Eider at Ocean City on Oct. 28 (John W. Taylor, Charles Mayhood). A lone Old-squaw on Triadelphia Reservoir on Oct. 28 (Seth Low) is a noteworthy occurrence for that part of the State. Blue Geese are continuing to increase in Maryland; note the high numbers recorded on the Christmas Bird Counts.

Vultures and Hawks. The Black Vulture continues to increase on the Eastern Shore. Two were seen at Denton on Nov. 15 (Mrs. A. J. Fletcher) and 2 at Ridgeley, also in Caroline Co., on Nov. 26 (Marvin Hewitt). The fall hawk flight is to be summarized in a separate article, but an immature Golden Eagle seen on Oct. 16 by Douglas Hackman at his home in White Marsh is worthy of special mention, as is a dead one recorded at Elk Neck on Dec. 28 by Seth Low, John Wholey and Chandler Robbins; this species may not be so rare on the Coastal Plain as the very small number of records would indicate.

Shorebirds. There were interesting shorebird reports from all parts of the State. The prize observation from the coast was a group of 5 Piping Plover under the Ocean City bridge on Dec. 28—the first December record (John W. Taylor, Charles Mayhood and others). Other unusual stragglers were 2 Semipalmated Plover and 2 Ruddy Turnstones identified by John Willoughby and others on the Ocean City Christmas Count, Dec. 22. From Sandy Point we have the first fall record of the Marbled Godwit on this side of Chesapeake Bay—a single bird studied at very close range by Mesdames Tappan, North, Vinup and Henderson on Sept. 18. A count of 3 Woodcock at Allen's Fresh in Charles County on Dec. 30 suggests that this species may winter regularly in Southern Maryland as it does on the Lower Eastern Shore (John Terborgh, Nick Kerr, Larry Griffin). The third Avocet record for Maryland was obtained by John H. Buckalew on Oct. 23 at Point No Point in St. Marys County. From the Piedmont we have some unusual records obtained at Triadelphia Reservoir on Oct. 28 by Seth Low: 7 Red-backed Sandpipers, and one each of Black-bellied Plover, Pectoral Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, and Semipalmated Sandpiper; Mr. Low made a point of flushing this very interesting flock so it could be recorded for both Montgomery and Howard Counties. At the crest of the Allegheny Front, Robbins heard and saw a single Golden Plover as it circled the Dan's Mountain fire tower on Sept. 15—the first Maryland occurrence of this species away from tidewater. And finally, from Grantsville in Garrett County, there is the first December record for the Wilson's Shipe in our section of the Allegheny Plateau—one observed on Dec. 23 by James Smart.

Gulls and Terns. During stormy periods in the fall, Laughing Gulls sometimes congregate in very large flocks in the Sandy Point—Gibson Island area. The largest such noted this year was an estimated 1,000 birds at Gibson Island on Nov. 1 (Mrs. Henderson, Mrs. Tappan). Another gull record resulting from the same storm is a group of 15

Ring-bills at Mountain Lake in Garrett County, Nov. 2 (Miss Slater). Three late Forster's Terns were found at Port Tobacco on Nov. 18 (Catherine Crone and party), and along the coast another late December record was chalked up on the Ocean City Christmas Count by John Willoughby.

Owls, Nighthawks. An early Saw-whet Owl was hit by a car at Fort Washington on Oct. 24 (James O. Stevenson). Although the heaviest Nighthawk flights are noted in the western counties, the last stragglers are frequently reported from more eastern sections. The last report from Allegany County (in spite of excellent subsequent coverage during the hawk trips) was at LaVale, Sept. 14. At Middle River this species was noted on Sept. 16, at Beltsville to Sept. 20, and at Denton where it breeds, to Sept. 25.

Flycatchers, Raven. Marvin Hewitt saw a late Eastern Kingbird at Greensboro on Sept. 27. Crested Flycatchers were reported from all parts of the State through Sept. 15, but none were noted after the 19th. Late Eastern Phoebe appear to be the rule rather than the exception; transient individuals were found in Baltimore County on Nov. 11 (Pearl Heaps) and at Beltsville, Nov. 18-19 (John H. Fales). One at Emmitsburg on Dec. 28 (John W. Richards) and one recorded on the Catocin Christmas Count two days later with 8 to 10 inches of snow on the ground were evidently attempting to winter. Raven records east of the mountains are extremely few, but obvious increases in numbers of this species in the mountains in recent years, and scattered reports from the Coastal Plain of Virginia should encourage observers to keep on the watch for this bird; one passed down Douglas Hackman's hawk flyway at White Marsh on Oct. 12.

Nuthatches, Wrens, Catbird. Willis saw an early Winter Wren at Middle River, Sept. 24. A Short-billed Marsh Wren at Port Tobacco on Sept. 23 (Miss Crone and others) appears to be the first record for Charles County. Late Catbirds were found at Denton on Oct. 17, Middle River on Oct. 23, and Forest Glen on Oct. 27.

Thrushes, Gnatcatcher. The thrush flight continued later than is usual, furnishing several interesting records. Among these are some Caroline County dates that should be mentioned since the species concerned are much less common on the Eastern Shore than in the more western parts of the State: Olive-backed Thrush to Oct. 5 at Greensboro, Gray-cheeked Thrush on Sept. 20 at Hillsboro, and Veery to Sept. 12 at Denton (all by Hewitt). West of the Bay, the Olive-back was still common on Oct. 14 (Beltsville, Fales), and the last straggler was heard in migration on Oct. 20 (Laurel, Robbins); the Gray-cheek was noted to Oct. 14 at Middle River (Willis), and the Veery to Sept. 26 at Patuxent Refuge (Stewart). Two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers seen on Oct. 2, by Mrs. Fletcher at her home on Garland Lake near Denton, are the latest on record for the State.

Pipit, Vireos. Another State record was an early American Pipit migrating southward over Dan's Rock on Sept. 15 (Robbins). There were several late vireo records. The White-eyed was last noted at Denton

on Oct. 3 (Mrs. Fletcher); 2 Yellow-throateds at Gibson Island, Oct. 1; one Blue-headed at Forest Glen on Oct. 27 (Frank C. Cross), one on Oct. 31 at Towson (Coles), and another singing at Sandy Point on Nov. 10 (Cross and Miss Clara Schoenbauer).

Warblers. Here again, emphasis centers on late records, as there were very few "early birds" in this period, and no outstanding waves to provide unusual concentrations. It should be stressed that the dates mentioned in this paragraph relate to the latest stragglers, some of which are the latest on record for the State, and most of which are at least a week or two beyond normal departure time. Worm-eating Warbler, 1 at Greensboro, Oct. 1 (Hewitt). Prothonotary Warbler, 1 at Middle River, Sept. 2 (Willis), latest on record for a northern county. Tennessee Warbler, a fine flight with a peak of 18 at Middle River on Sept. 25, and several late occurrences: 1 at Middle River, Oct. 14 (Willis); 2 at North Woodside, Oct. 21 (Cross); 1 banded at Unity, Nov. 17 (Low), the latest record since 1889. Orange-crowned Warbler, an early individual of this rare species was banded at Unity, Oct. 7 (Low). Magnolia Warbler, 1 well seen at Turkey Neck, Garrett Co., Oct. 27 (Miss Slater). Cape May Warbler, 2, Kent Island, Nov. 10 (Robbins and MOS trip). Yellow-throated Warbler, 1, Preston, Sept. 10 by Hewitt (very few departure dates are available for this species). Chestnut-sided Warbler, 1, Lake Roland, Oct. 10 (Charles Buchanan). Black-poll Warbler, 1 on Oct. 23 at North Woodside (Cross). Cerulean Warbler, 1 at Middle River, Sept. 23 (Willis). Western Palm Warbler, 1 seen in migration at Kent Is., Nov. 10 (Robbins and MOS); later reports may have been wintering birds. Northern Water-thrush, 1 at Middle River, Oct. 7 (Willis). La. Water-thrush, 1 singing at Forest Glen, Sept. 20 (Cross). Kentucky Warbler, 1 at Denton, Sept. 18 (Mrs. Fletcher) and another at Towson the same day (Richard D. Cole). Yellow-throat, 1 at Denton, Oct. 22 (Alicia Knotts), one at Patuxent Refuge, Oct. 24 (Robbins), and a wintering bird at Middle River. Yellow-breasted Chat, 1 at Port Tobacco, Sept. 23 (Miss Crone and others). Canada Warbler, 1 at Patuxent Refuge, Oct. 4 (Stewart). American Redstart, a female at Chevy Chase, Dec. 4 (Dr. A. M. Stimson).

Blackbirds, Orioles, Tanagers. A very late Baltimore Oriole was seen at Middle River on Nov. 23 (Willis). The first record of the Boat-tailed Grackle at Gibson Island was made on Dec. 21, when Mrs. Tappan observed a flock of 10 birds there. Although this species winters in large numbers in Somerset County, this is the first winter occurrence from farther up the Bay. A record count of 128 was made at Ocean City, Nov. 11 (MOS trip). Seven Summer Tanagers on Sept. 23 is a new high count for that late in the season, even in the Port Tobacco area (Miss Crone and party).

Finches. The most notable occurrence within this group is the Evening Grosbeak invasion, the greatest southward thrust this species has ever made in the East. It began with a succession of record-breaking early dates (first 5 at Patuxent Refuge on Oct. 23 by Robert E. Stewart), and numbers continued to swell throughout the period. The Pine Grosbeak made its second recorded visit to our State, but in much

lower numbers than the Evening. Professor John W. Richards had the honor of seeing this species first on Nov. 24 at Mt. St. Mary's College near Emmitsburg; further information will appear in a separate article by Professor Richards. Other northern finches were scarce, except for the Pine Siskin which was noted at several localities; Willis recorded a total of 100 individuals of this finch at Middle River, Oct. 30 to Nov. 28. An early Purple Finch at Simpsonville, Howard Co., on Sept. 4 was followed by a poor flight (Robbins). A Dickcissel banded at Unity on Nov. 22-24 by Seth Low is by far the latest on record for the State, and will likely remain so until the first wintering bird is detected.

**Sparrows.** Little is known about the migration peak of the Grasshopper Sparrow in our area; it is likely that it occurs in late August or early September. Every year, however, a few individuals are found well into October, and this fall Seth Low banded 3 on the late date of Oct. 27; possibly this secretive species is more common in late fall than we have suspected. A late Chipping Sparrow with an injured eye was banded on Nov. 17 at Unity (Low). Early dates for the White-crowned Sparrow were Oct. 6 at Turkey Neck, Garrett Co. (Miss Slater) and Oct. 7 at Middle River (Willis). The only September records for the White-throated Sparrow were furnished by Edwin Willis at Middle River, where he had the first 4 on Sept. 24. Buchanan noted one at Baltimore, Oct. 1; and Cross saw one at Forest Glen, Oct. 3. The next 2 birds, strangely enough, were both Chesapeake Bay casualties. One was fished out of the Bay at Gibson Island on Oct. 7 by Mrs. Palmer, and the other hit a ship's rigging off Bloodsworth Island at 6 a.m. on Oct. 8 (M. S. Cueto). The only Snow Bunting of the season was recorded at Gibson Island, Dec. 6-7 (Mrs. Henderson and others).

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#### CATBIRDS NESTING HIGH IN TREES

Catbird nests are so typically built within a few feet of the ground that it is always surprising to find one high in a tree - although Bent's "Life Histories of North American Nuthatches, Wrens, Thrashers and Allies," Bulletin 195 of the U. S. National Museum, cites records of nests as low as the ground itself and as high as 50 to 60 feet. I have seen two tree nests in Maryland in recent years.

On July 18, 1944, I located a nest with three eggs 30 feet up in a red maple about 45 feet tall at Daniels Park, Prince Georges County.

On June 28, 1948, Mr. Lee Dean called my attention to a nest about 23½ feet up in a 28-foot elm at Dickeyville, Baltimore City; on July 2 I saw food carried to this nest. In 1947 Mr. Dean had also reported a Catbird nest in the top of that tree, but I did not locate it. The use of this treetop in two successive years suggests that one or both Catbirds were the same in both years and had something of a predilection for tree-nesting; shrubs, briars and scrub growth immediately at hand offered an abundance of typical nest sites.

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